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## **Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)**

**Read this page to learn if ALDs can help your child, and how to get them.**

### **What ALDs are**

An ALD brings sounds to your child's ears so that he can hear better. Two of the most common ALDs used by children are FM systems and Sound Field Systems. Here's how ALD's help:

- They cut down on background noise.
- They make faraway sounds seem closer to your child.
- They help your child hear in a large room, like an auditorium.

### **FM systems**

#### How an FM system works

An FM system lets you talk into a microphone and sends the sound of your voice to your child's ear. An FM system has three parts:

- A microphone
- A transmitter
- A receiver



Here's how it works:

1. You talk into a microphone.
  - The microphone can be used by one person, like a parent or teacher.
  - You can also set up a microphone in the middle of a small group. The mic will pick up their voices and send them to your child's ear.
2. The microphone is connected to a transmitter. The transmitter sends the sounds to a receiver.
3. The receiver gets the sound and plays them back into your child's ear. It can be used with or without a hearing aid.
  - If your child is getting a hearing aid, make sure that it can be hooked up to an FM device.
  - If your child does not use a hearing aid, get a head set that will hold the receiver close to your child's ear.

## Who can use an FM system

Children of all ages can use an FM system:

- Babies
- Toddlers
- Older children

An FM system may also be helpful if your child has a **unilateral hearing loss**. A unilateral hearing loss is a hearing loss in only one ear. The device would probably be used in the better ear.

## Where your child can use an FM system

- At home
  - An FM system can help your child hear you better when you're talking to him.
- At school
  - The FM system can help your child hear the teacher clearly.
  - The FM system works even if the teacher is far away, or if there is other noise in the classroom.
- Outside the home
  - You can use the FM system when shopping or on outings away from home.
  - Your child may also use the microphone himself. That way he can hear his own voice better and learn how to speak more clearly.

## Different kinds of microphones

There are different kinds of microphones for FM systems:

- **A lapel mic**
  - This kind of mic clips onto your shirt or jacket.
  - This kind of mic is also called a **lavalier mic**.
- **A boom mic**
  - You wear a boom mic on a headset. The headset keeps the mic at a certain distance from your mouth.
- **A handi mic**
  - A handi mic has different settings. One setting lets it pick up the voices of several people in different parts of the room. Another setting may let you pick up the sound of a speaker in one direction.
  - The handi mic can also be passed around to different speakers.

## How you can get an FM system

Ask your child's audiologist about getting an FM system for your child.

## **Sound Field Systems**

### How a Sound Field System works

A Sound Field System is a lot like an FM system. Here's how it works:

1. You talk into a microphone.
  - The microphone can be used by one person, like a parent or teacher.
  - You can also set up a microphone in the middle of a small group. The mic will pick up their voices and send them to your child's ear.
2. The microphone is connected to a transmitter. The transmitter sends the sounds to a receiver.
3. The sound is sent to speakers placed all around a room.

#### How it can help

- A Sound Field System can help all children in the class hear the teacher's voice better.
- A Sound Field System is especially helpful for children who are hard of hearing or have mild to moderate hearing loss.
- A Sound Field System can also help children who have cochlear implants.

#### Where you can use a Sound Field System

Sound Field Systems are mostly used in classrooms.

#### How you can get a Sound Field System

Your child's school may have a sound field system. Ask your child's teacher or the principal if the school has it. If they don't, ask for one at your child's IEP meeting. The law says schools have to give children with hearing loss special help like this. Read [Your Child's Rights](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/rights/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/rights/>) to learn more about the laws that protect your child.

#### Key points

- An FM system can help your child hear better at home, school and other places.
- Get hearing aids that work with FM systems.

#### **Learn more about ALDs:**

- [Assistive Listening Devices FAQ](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/faq.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/faq.jsp>)
- [My Baby's Hearing](http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/assistive.asp) (<http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/assistive.asp>)
- [The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/treatment/assist_tech.htm) ([http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/treatment/assist\\_tech.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/treatment/assist_tech.htm))

To find out where you can buy ALDs, visit Hearing Loss Web's page on [companies that make or sell assistive listening devices](http://www.hearinglossweb.com/res/ald/ald.htm) (<http://www.hearinglossweb.com/res/ald/ald.htm>).

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*You can find this page online at:*

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ald/>